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For my parents:

Samuel Irving Bellman
(Professor Emeritus of English, California State Polytechnic University, Pomona), who devoted much of his professional life to teaching writing to the undergraduates of the state of California;

Jeanne Lisker Bellman,
who taught her sons;

and my wife and son:

Deborah Ann Kauffman and Benjamin Howard Bellman—
mihi vita cariores sunt.

6

RESEARCH IN MUSIC

It is the rare music student indeed who rejoices at the announcement of a written assignment or term paper.[1]

—JOHN E. DRUESEDOW, JR.

Although research papers, program notes, reviews, and critical essays all have different primary goals, they also have a good deal in common; each of these genres utilizes both research and critical evaluation. The distinctions are of emphasis rather than of kind: an essay is primarily a persuasive exercise, but it needs to be based on facts; program notes are primarily a presentation of general background research targeted at the music lover rather than a more specialized reader; and the research paper is primarily a presentation of specific, academic research in coherent, digested form.

This chapter addresses the research process in music, from the choice of topic to the gathering of material to organization to written presentation.

THE PURPOSES OF RESEARCH

Students too often look upon the musical scholarship they read in books and journals as something to be neither questioned nor used as a model, seeing it instead as the intimidating product of higher, perhaps more boring but certainly wholly alien, intellects. Music researchers, therefore,

[1]John E. Druesedow, Jr., *Library Research Guide to Music* (Ann Arbor, MI: Pierian Press, 1982), 1.

are perceived to be fundamentally separate from other musicians and the musical world. Researching, a skill that will prove invaluable in a musical lifetime, is feared and avoided. This is wrong, but widespread.

Far better is the idea of a continuum. There is no essential difference between student research and professional research, for they share the goal of enhancing the understanding of both researcher and readers. In a college course, this means the understanding of the student author-researcher, perhaps the class, and even the professor. (The professor may well learn something about the subject and will certainly learn about the student author's understanding of it.) When writing for publication, the goal is to enlighten a certain kind of reader: an article in a magazine will seek to enlighten one group of readers, and an article in a scholarly journal or book will aim at another group. But with all topics, from the most widely studied to the most obscure, each author offers something unique, and so may be said to make a contribution to the field, even when the contribution is simply a clear summary and presentation of others' published research. For the undergraduate, seeing yourself as a member of the broad authorial and research family enables you to identify more and more with the wider musical world and to find a place within it without limiting your view to the immediate environment of practice-room, classroom, or department.

CHOICE OF TOPIC

In many courses you will be assigned a topic or told to choose your own topic within assigned parameters. When you have no immediate affinity for your topic, don't waste time feeling resentful. Think of your task the way you would think of practicing études, or learning or teaching repertoire that does (yet) not have your full sympathy. In performance, every work is your favorite work in the world, and every style has your most profound commitment. So it is with writing; regardless of the topic or the extent of your commitment, every stage of the process requires your absolute best.

If you do have leeway in choosing a topic, write about the subject matter closest to your heart. Such a choice may involve a particular work or kind of music, a musical issue or question, or any of a number of related areas, but it is best to proceed from your own passion. The worst course of action is to choose a topic on the basis of what you think the professor would like to see, or the supposed ease of completion, or the

simplicity of the issue involved. The goal of "just getting it done" is no more acceptable than the goal of a barely acceptable performance of a Mozart piano concerto would be.

A common mistake is the choice of a topic that is too broad. Topics such as "American Indian Music," "Nicolò Paganini: Life and Music," and "The Blues Roots of Rock and Roll" may initially seem promising, but a tremendous amount of research has already been done in those areas, and a college- or even graduate-level research paper on such a broad topic could only be a collection of somewhat random facts that do not lead in a particular direction. A wiser approach would be to narrow the field, resulting in a topic such as "Cherokee Courtship Songs," "Paganini the Composer," or "Robert Johnson's Influence on English Blues-Rock." Answering a specific how or why question or addressing some other specific task can focus research more easily than trying to produce an "overview" paper. Setting boundaries can help ensure that the researcher does not become rudderless after the research process is already well underway.

If, conversely, a topic is too narrow, you can broaden the scope by expanding the time period in question, looking at related repertoire or additional composers, or asking different questions about the context in which the music under discussion appeared. Ultimately, whether a topic is too narrow or too broad depends in large part on the author's background and the length of the assignment. Self-awareness and forethought are therefore indispensable tools in the early stages of research.

LOCATING SOURCES

Most people now have access to online library catalogues—searchable electronic databases. Predictably, the protocols for using these tools differ widely, including their uses of keywords, their ability to accommodate Boolean searches (i.e., those in which the desired words or character strings relate to each other in ways described by *and*, *or*, and *not*), and any number of other variables. Each system and search protocol must be mastered, and this is a matter of time and experience. For example, searching *strauss orchestration* in some systems might identify sources with those words in the title, or (better) subject headings, but in others would only show sources with that exact string of characters, which are likely to be few. Trying a variety of different search strategies is always necessary, and the more creative you are, the more sources you will find. (More on resourcefulness in the search process below.) Suffice to say, if you are not finding any information at all on your topic, the problem is likely to be with your search strategy, not a complete absence of information on a topic in your library or the available electronic databases.

KINDS OF WRITTEN SOURCES

Publications about music (that is, books and articles), musical scores themselves, and sound recordings are all sources—sources to be used very differently—and these sources (and a great deal else) may be available in electronic form. Here are four truths regarding sources:

- There is a huge amount of source material available.
- The number of sources is constantly growing.
- No source is 100% dependable.
- No single source is completely duplicated by another.

It is safe neither to trust any single source implicitly nor to ignore any sources you have at your disposal. As many sources as possible must be critically examined. The task of the researcher is not only to be aware of and familiar with the relevant sources, but to be able to evaluate each and use it accordingly. (The idea of evaluation is discussed below.)

Non-English Sources

In music, research material directly relevant to your work is not always published in English. For this reason, the ability to access literature in foreign languages is a great advantage. The available English-language sources will usually be sufficient for undergraduate research topics, although if you are studying a foreign language it would be a great idea to try your linguistic wings on a source or two in that language. For graduate-level research, or research intended for publication, access to foreign-language sources is a necessity, either through using your own skills (which always benefit from practice) or, less ideally, with the help of a friend or professional translator. Much depends on the topic: for example, virtually all the important sources on the Spanish composer Joaquín Rodrigo are in Spanish, so it is hard to imagine any research on him by someone with no capability in that language. By contrast, a good deal of the most important research on composers such as Bach and Mozart is written in English, so one could certainly say that it is as important for a German or Austrian researcher studying those composers to know English as it is for English and

North American researchers to know German. The truth is that language skills are necessary for any ongoing work in music research. That said, we will proceed to a short survey of English-language sources.

Reference Sources

The first stop for any research project needs to be one (or more) of the major reference works in music. Among the benefits of this is the clarification of concepts central to your project but perhaps not all that common outside it (that is, the huge gray area between "common knowledge" and the specifics you will be researching and citing); you want to have a good sense for this *before* the project is well under way. The information in standard reference works is the product, for the most part, of relatively recent scholarship (although, of course, our understanding deepens all the time, and no source is error-free). Bibliographies of relevant books and articles are often provided, offering a variety of fruitful places to look next.

The standard English-language music reference work is *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, second edition, edited by Stanley Sadie, in 29 volumes (London: Macmillan, 2001). More an encyclopedia than a dictionary, this compendious work is built upon the first edition (1980), but that earlier edition was descended more distantly from the several different editions of *Grove's Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, the first of which appeared in 1879. The 1980 edition of the *New Grove* had several spin-off series: the *New Grove Dictionary of Musical Instruments* (1984), the *New Grove Dictionary of American Music* (1986), the *New Grove Dictionary of Jazz* (1988), and the *New Grove Dictionary of Opera* (1992). The *New Grove* is now also available online, on a subscription basis, in a continually updated format. Rock and pop music has a similar work: the *Encyclopedia of Popular Music*, second edition, compiled and edited by Colin Larkin, in eight volumes (New York: Muze UK, 1998). The equivalent work for world music is *The Garland Encyclopedia of World Music* (New York: Garland, 1998). Musical terminology may be found in the *New Harvard Dictionary of Music*, third edition, edited by Don Randel (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1986), and musicians and musical figures can be found in *Baker's Biographical Dictionary of Musicians*, eighth edition, edited by Nicolas Slonimsky (New York: Schirmer, 1992).

The preceding is only the shortest of short lists; further help on navigating the thousands of reference works available in music may be found by consulting Phillip D. Crabtree and Donald H. Foster, *Sourcebook for Research in Music* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1993), Vincent H. Duckles and Ida Reed, *Music Reference and Research Materials: An Annotated Bibliography*, fifth edition (New York: Schirmer, 1997), or a good reference librarian. Even better, browse the reference shelf before consulting the librarian; first learn as much as you can on your own. Before approaching a librarian, make sure you have already made an intelligent, good-faith effort to find at least the basic information yourself.

Books

Articles in reference works often include bibliographies, and this is true with many of the articles in the *New Grove II* (as it is informally known; this is not appropriate for formal citations unless you are specifically told it will suffice for an abbreviated format). The moment a bibliography is printed, however, it is closed to new and potentially important entries. Older sources are by no means automatically superseded by later ones, but it is not safe to rely on them when further research has been carried out. In general, one should start with the most recent work, from which a sense of the entire body of research ought to emerge. (The section Relative Age of Sources below will offer more thoughts on this issue.)

Before taking the next step, you need to have a solid familiarity with the music to be studied. It is expected, then, that you will already have the scores and have listened to recordings—ideally, several different recordings, so that you can compare them. Do not underestimate the importance of this step; your written sources may well assume that the reader is already familiar with the music, so using them before you have achieved this familiarity will only mean you have to return and read them again.

After you have perused the reference works and are familiar with the music, your next visit to the music library is likely to net you several books relevant to your topic. Let us say that you are studying Liszt's Sonata in B Minor for piano. You locate the Liszt section and immediately find at least one book entirely devoted to the piece, plus a number of other substantial-looking books, several of which (you learn from the tables of contents and indexes) have lengthy passages, or even entire chapters, about the piece. Given this bounty, you may be tempted to believe that you are done collecting material. But wait: completely different perspectives may await you in books on the piano sonata (in general), on Hungarian music (Liszt is still probably Hungary's most famous composer), and on nineteenth-century "Music of the Future" (Liszt and Wagner being the most prominent exponents of this school), to name only three areas.

So, in seeking out relevant books, it is necessary to approach a research topic from several different directions. Often the most helpful information will be gleaned from books that initially seem to be only tangentially related to your topic.

Do not forget collections of correspondence, autobiographical material, and primary-source documentation. Although an individual's first-person testimony may not be any more trustworthy than other sources (memories may fade, translations may mislead, and a particular version of a story may seem more attractive to the author than what actually happened), it offers yet another angle of approach to a musical work, person, or question. When a particular work is being studied, *always* look for it in the index to the composer's published correspondence, and even if it does not appear, read as much as possible about that portion of the composer's life.

Journal and Magazine Articles

Much of the periodical literature is *juried* or *peer-reviewed*, equivalent terms meaning that before an article is published, it is read and approved by the editor of the publication and one or more outside readers in order to make sure that it meets the scholarly and literary standards of the publication. This process of course cannot guarantee the veracity of every word published—which remains the author's responsibility—but the additional scholarly oversight does offer further assurance of quality. It is harder to establish quality with nonjuried publications, such as many newsletters; since there is no guarantee of external reading or approval their veracity might depend entirely on the scholarly method and integrity of each individual author, or there may still be substantial editorial oversight. Scholarly newsletters (such as the *Newsletter of the American Brahms Society*) tend to be as dependable as juried publications simply because they function as scholarly journals; they are usually produced by scholars and have scholarly contributions, but they serve the needs of a narrower group of readers than a journal would.

For all but the most superficial research projects, the periodical literature must be scoured for relevant articles. The same observations about directly and indirectly related book sources apply here, too, so for information on Brahms, for example, you would have to look at more periodicals than the *Newsletter of the American Brahms Society*, helpful and relevant though it will be. Other angles, in addition to scholarly theory and history journals, might include publications on piano music (or chamber music, the symphony, choral music, etc.), nineteenth-century music, or

theory and analysis. A sober reminder is in order here: music as a field does not enjoy some of the resources that other fields do. Although the entire historical periodical literature in some professions is almost completely indexed (and others have most of the publications themselves available online), there is currently no single database that encompasses the whole of the music periodical literature. Despite the fact that music as a discipline is considerably behind better-funded fields, though, the situation is improving, and both print and electronic databases are available.

For the last few decades, two print sources have been standard: *The Music Index: A Subject-Author Guide to Music Periodical Literature* (Detroit: Information Services, 1949–63; Detroit: Information Coordinators, 1963–87; Warren, MI: Harmonie Park Press [Information Coordinators], 1987–), and *RILM Abstracts of Music Literature/Répertoire internationale de la littérature musicale* (New York: International Musicological Society, the Association of Music Libraries, Archives, and Document Centers, and the International Council for Traditional Music, 1967–). *The Music Index* provides article citations for a wide variety of music periodicals, including review citations indexed by the subject of the review. *RILM Abstracts* provides citations and abstracts not only for periodical articles, but also for books on music, master's theses, and doctoral dissertations. Both of these databases are available online and are far easier to use electronically.

A more recent, online-only resource is the *International Index of Music Periodicals* (Chadwyck-Healey, Inc.), a highly useful searchable database, with brief abstracts as well as citations for articles on musical subjects (though it tends to be weighted toward recording and performance reviews). For locating relevant articles in the historical periodical literature, there are both print and online versions of *RIPM*, the Retrospective Index to Music Periodicals/*Répertoire international de la presse musicale*, which covers roughly 1800–1950. Of course, it is impossible for such a database to be exhaustive, given the sheer number of European periodicals, but it is still an invaluable resource for locating *contemporary* commentary about historical music, performers, and institutions.

Other Web-Based Sources

Databases aside, the World Wide Web is making an ever-increasing amount of material available in this, the so-called Information Age. As mentioned before, some of this material duplicates or updates (with much greater convenience) print resources such as the *New Grove Dictionary*, the *RILM* and *RIPM Abstracts*, and the *Music Index*. Because of

the ephemerality of any electronic medium, I recommend consulting electronic resources in addition to those in print, *not* as an alternative. Unfortunately, sometimes severe financial constraints force libraries to opt for virtual resources rather than those in print. The basic principle is to look at anything and everything you can! To my knowledge, *no music periodical database is complete*, and so it follows that no database exhaustively duplicates another.

World Wide Web pages may be owned and administered by a company, an organization, a scholar, a hobbyist, any private individual: anyone with access to the required computer resources. A tremendous amount of information may be found on Web pages, the format of which lends itself to people with specific, somewhat narrow interests. One might learn more about the French Revolutionary composer François-Joseph Gossec, for example, from a Web site devoted to his life and music than from a general reference source that has to be judicious about the space it devotes to minor masters. There is no guarantee of oversight, though, and despite the amount of information readily available, variations in quality and dependability can be extreme.

Issues of accuracy and scholarly dependability are even more immediate with Wiki-based sources such as wikipedia.com. A Wiki is a piece of server or database software that allows any and all users to make changes in content. Wikipedia.com, perhaps the most well known of these sites, is like a huge encyclopedia with articles written by those with appropriate expertise, and indeed a tremendous amount of value is to be found there. This "democratization of the Web" is an idealistic—indeed, utopian—approach, but its price is that no editorial oversight is in place to prevent misinformation from being posted and disseminated. Such a thing might be the result of an author's practical joke, the desire to slander someone living or dead, or just a partisan insistence on some issue or other, but the Wiki structure means that any user has control over the content. It follows that any information gleaned from a Wiki-based site can range from authoritative to fraudulent. Anything found on such a site must therefore be corroborated elsewhere, and should not be used and cited independently of other sources. (More on source criticism below.)

Recording Liner Notes

Almost all sound recordings come with some kind of explanatory material, and there is nothing wrong (in principle) with utilizing it in the research process. That said, a warning of *caveat lector* ("Let the reader beware") is in order. Many recordings have excellent notes, but others do not; authors can be hobbled by the limited space provided, or told to write on a *very* general level, or (worst of all) told to lighten it up and be entertaining. Sometimes recording companies seem to feel that liner notes are not important enough to warrant a competent author in the first place. Notes often tend to be general, rightly targeted at the music-purchasing public rather than a research audience, so they cannot serve as the backbone source of a project. Still, helpful information is often to be found in these sources, and first-rank scholars are sometimes engaged to write them. There are no guarantees either way, so the only safe comment to make is that with practice, you will develop good instincts about the quality of what you read.

Musical Scores

Almost any research on a musical topic requires the examination of musical scores. All scores are not, however, created equal; different kinds of scores are produced with different purposes in mind. More discussion of this point follows in Use of Sources, below; for now it will suffice to describe several varieties of scores.

An *Urtext* is an edition that seeks to transmit, as faithfully and exactly as possible, what the composer put on the manuscript page and/or what appeared in the earliest editions, those presumably under the composer's control, without editorial intrusions of any kind. Frequently the explanatory notes of the Urtext editions address variant readings and differences between sources. A *performance edition* provides not only the composer's score but also an editor's recommendations for performance. These may include (in addition to whatever indications the composer provided) suggestions on phrasing, fingering, bowing, articulation, ornamentation, and general performance instructions and metronome marks. (A hybrid is the *critical edition*, or *scholarly performance edition*, which seeks to marry scholarly accuracy of the score with informed recommendations regarding historical performance practices.) *Study scores* are generally low-budget reprints of earlier editions (miniature scores fall into this category); their goal is to make available a maximum amount of music for the minimum cost. They are intended neither as performing editions nor as last-word scholarly documents. *Collected works* editions, found primarily in libraries, seek to include a composer's entire output in a single, multivolume edition. Related to collected works are *monumental editions*, also intended primarily for libraries, which include generally hard-to-find works by a variety of historical composers (especially

so-called *Kleinmeister*, minor masters). Famous examples of monumental sets include *Denkmäler der Tonkunst in Osterreich* (Monuments of Musical Art in Austria) and *Musica Britannica*. Scholarly accuracy is a central goal of both collected works and monumental editions, but since scholars continue working in these areas, the accuracy of this work tends to come under debate relatively quickly.

For learning the contents of collected works and monumental editions, the best source is still Anna Harriet Heyer, *Historical Sets, Collected Editions, and Monuments of Music*, second edition (Chicago: American Library Association, 1980), in two volumes. A newer version, edited by George Hill and Norris Stephens, appeared in 1997; it incorporates the contents of sets published since 1980, but does not include the complete contents of the earlier edition. The two versions are organized in different ways, and require a certain amount of practice. When this information is all available electronically, as Hill and Stephens suggest it will be, that will potentially be the most efficient format.

USE OF SOURCES

Optimizing Research Time

Working intelligently is far better than working hard. As you go through your steadily increasing pile of sources, you may begin to suspect that it will be impossible to complete your project (or any project) before the due date, or for that matter before your graduation! Just to read six available biographies would take more time than you have. Isn't there, you wonder, a better way?

This is where a revelation occurs: you do not need to read, word for word, every source that looks like it may have something promising. Skimming sources for relevant material is one of the researcher's most essential skills. When you research a particular piece or pieces, start with a basic understanding of the composer's biography (such as may be found in *New Grove II*, or in a recently published biography) and then proceed to tables of contents and indexes, looking for information on your piece. Find the years in which the piece was composed and examine the passages dealing with that time period for relevant information. The same is true when you research a person or a problem rather than a particular piece; save time by using safe, dependable shortcuts.

Don't Believe Everything You Read!

Caveat lector again—this warning is as valuable today as it has ever been. Virtually every source, from the most scholarly to the most popularized, contains errors. Unfortunately, authors have different standards of accuracy, and although a book's main area of focus may be rigorously documented and presented, ancillary material may be somewhat more casually handled. You may doubt that a student or other pre-professional would be able to judge the merit of published works (or even have the gall to attempt it), but you are well within your rights and capabilities in learning to do so.

Imagine that you want to do a research paper on a favorite 1960s rock group, and you find the group discussed in great detail in a book that seeks to prove that rock is the greatest evil of the modern era: the pernicious product of hostile foreign influences, the devil, or both. (Such books do exist.) Would you trust the author's comments about your favorite group? Must you, because this book is in print, quote it and treat its content as fact, or at least as worth addressing? To choose a less extreme example, imagine that you are interested in, say, the masses of a certain Renaissance composer. You find contradictory information in two books, one a general history of Western music, the other a more specialized study of this composer's works. You must ask: when were the two sources written, and which is more likely to be right? You will have to check additional sources in hopes of identifying the error and avoiding it, whoever made it. And this leaves aside the different interpretive conclusions, presented with due authorial assurance, that will be drawn by different writers about the same musical works or music-related issues. Although there is no surefire method, particularly for students, for evaluating unfamiliar sources, the principles explained above will aid in this process and will enable your research instincts to become ever more dependable.

Scholarly vs. Textbook Sources

Sources need to be evaluated with their particular goals kept in mind. General sources and more specialized scholarly sources differ in a variety of ways, and they cannot be understood as equivalent. For example, one standard general history textbook states, "The vocal forms of the Renaissance were marked by smoothly gliding melodies conceived for the

voice."[2] What does the student researcher then make of some of the early secular vocal works of the fifteenth-century composer Guillaume Du Fay, which can be highly syncopated, rhythmically complex, and difficult enough to require a virtuoso vocal technique? What of the sometimes frenetic and mercurial melodic lines of the late-Renaissance madrigals of Carlo Gesualdo? But these counterexamples do not negate the idea that, in general, a good part of the vocal aesthetic of Renaissance church music had to do with smoothness, seamlessness, and the creation of melodies that were not only gratifying to sing but resonated well within the acoustic spaces of churches and cathedrals, where voices were frequently heard.

Remember, general sources provide a *general* background; they prepare the reader for further work by presenting a broad overall context, but they cannot be read as if their information were as specifically true as that in specialized studies. This caveat applies also to articles in periodicals; the goals and approach of (for example) an article appearing in a magazine for voice teachers must be kept in mind when comparing its contents with those of an article in a research journal.

Relative Age of Sources

Although certain older sources such as Manfred Bukofzer's *Music in the Baroque Era* (quoted in Chapter 3) remain immensely valuable, relying on them may be risky because of the extent to which later research has transformed the field. Older sources may also reflect antiquated and parochial perspectives. But reliance on modern sources, too, carries risks. Modern sources may be shaped and informed by fashionable but ephemeral critical or aesthetic perspectives, and are further removed from historical subjects than older sources are. So, although we may be properly cautious of older sources' presumed narrowness and antiquation, modern sources can themselves be firmly and confidently based on cultural suppositions alien to the subject in question.

The positive side of this two-part warning is that both older and more modern sources have, at least potentially, specific strengths. Older sources are closer to the worldview and zeitgeist of the music of recent centuries, and they may have the benefit of more oral history (such as authors' interviews with people involved with or witness to the music,

[2]Joseph Machlis and Kristine Forney, *The Enjoyment of Music*, 7th ed., Chronological version (New York: W. W. Norton, 1995), 99.

person, or issue under discussion). Further, an older source may be the product of a mind so insightful that it remains valuable no matter what particulars are altered by subsequent research. (The writings of Paul Henry Lang, Donald Francis Tovey, and—again—Manfred Bukofzer come to mind.) Modern sources usually aspire to modern scholarly standards, seek to take all relevant source material and previous research into account, and aim to arrive at critical conclusions based on evidence, and this may well make them more dependable—for most users—and inclusive than earlier efforts.

How much of this is true for each source will vary. The only generalizations it is safe to make are that the age of a source informs what and how it is able to communicate, and that all sources must be used by researchers with a critical stance in mind.

Authorial Perspective

The evaluation of not only authors but also their agendas is a vital task for the researcher, who seeks above all not to be misled. A modern reader will be surprised to find conversations among long-dead historical figures and detailed descriptions of historical events in certain older sources—and even in some newer ones—and still may (mistakenly) consider such sources trustworthy. Some decades ago, fabricating conversations and other historical details in order to produce a "good read" was acceptable. I would say, rather, that the presence of such material is sufficient grounds to consider a source highly suspect. Similar are those cases where the authors of books and articles approach a subject from a specific polemical position, such as that the essence of Chopin's character may be seen in his religious beliefs,[3] or that rock music is habitually laced with subliminal messages that range from commercially manipulative to satanic,[4] or that Arnold Schoenberg's views of the "emancipation of dissonance" were based on poor history and a personal agenda.[5] Authors who approach their musical subjects from the perspective of proving such all-encompassing points are best viewed

[3]Mateusz Gliński, *Chopin the Unknown* (Windsor, ONT: Assumption University of Windsor Press, 1963).
[4]Dan and Steve Peters, with Cher Merrill, *Rock's Hidden Persuader: The Truth about Backmasking* (Minneapolis: Bethany House, 1985).
[5]William Thomson, *Schoenberg's Error* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1991).

from a distance. Their goals are narrow, and scholarly rigor is frequently of secondary importance.

Dependability of the Source Itself

The more research one does, the more one develops a sense about the dependability of sources. Many people love music, many people produce it in some way, and (more to the point) many write about it, regardless of training, knowledge, or any other standard prerequisite. Music is a subject about which people with no training or practical experience often feel they have a good deal to say simply because they listen to it a lot and it gives them pleasure. Books and articles by both the trained and the untrained may look credible on first examination, regardless of whether the writings have had appropriate evaluation, editorial guidance, or oversight before publication.

As discussed earlier, the World Wide Web is even more problematic, its potential benefits notwithstanding. The democratization of information—anyone can set up a Web site and say virtually anything—makes it incumbent on researchers to be as critical as possible of the information they find there. Many Web sites are owned and administered by private citizens, and any monitoring for quality or accuracy is up to them. There is nothing to prevent a junior high or high school student from deciding to put everything she or he knows about the blues on a Web site—nor should there be—but the danger lies in a reader's uncritical trust in the information found there. It is easy to assume that anyone who takes the trouble to write, either on paper or on the Web, knows something about the subject—particularly when slick, professional-looking graphics and interfaces are involved in the presentation—but nothing could be further from the truth. This is why "I picked this up off the Web" is one of the least convincing defenses for any otherwise undefended information. It is not that information on private Web sites is automatically wrong; it is that there is nothing to *prevent* it from being wrong, and that it is necessary to corroborate it with other sources. Again, although there are no guarantees, juried sources are likely to be more dependable than nonjuried ones.

Special Difficulties in Using Musical Sources

In using and evaluating any source, always keep the focus of the project itself in clear view. This focus, more than anything else, will facilitate the accurate assessment of the source's relevance or authority for the purposes at

hand. Sources may be virtually unimpeachable as far as their intended uses, but through misuse or misinterpretation they may still lead the novice researcher astray. Among those most often misused are musical scores.

Let us say that a student-researcher wants to establish, as closely as possible, how J. S. Bach believed a particular sarabande for keyboard ought to be performed. Should this student go to the original manuscript or to an Urtext, a presumably faithful reproduction (in published form) of the score, exactly as the composer notated the work? The premise here would be that the score alone is as complete for today's reader as it was for Bach's contemporaries, that anything that Bach did not explicitly notate, a modern performer need not know. Is this a safe assumption for music written between 250 and 300 years ago? We know that musicians of Bach's time would have known and practiced certain performance conventions, from specific and idiomatic rhythmic realizations (such as *notes inégales*) to ways of ornamenting (for example, on repeats) and of achieving dynamic variation using the different manuals of a harpsichord. Neither the composer's manuscript nor a published Urtext would provide any of this information, and a student-researcher would be dangerously underinformed.

Is our student better off, then, with an edited musical score? Perhaps; perhaps not. Editors can provide explanatory notes and informed suggestions for phrasings, fingerings, ornamentation, and other matters, but they can also mislead by such prescriptions. A keyboard fingering conceived by a pianist today for digital ease and dependability might completely confound another player's hand, the phrasing of the period, and in any case be unworkable on a harpsichord, clavichord, or organ (the keyboard instruments of Bach's time). Suggested ornamentation in Baroque or Classic music, about which there is always much debate, might be far too conservative or too florid. What is more, our understanding of Baroque phrasing, fingering, and other performance considerations has changed a great deal since many highly edited nineteenth-century performance editions were produced, and it continues to change. The most recent available edition, then? Maybe, but who is to say that that one editor had all the answers? One recent edition of J. S. Bach's *Well-Tempered Clavier* so carefully and thoroughly provided all kinds of information that it became easy to ignore editorial markings because there were so many of them—a complete defeat of the purpose.[6] Moral: *nothing* is completely safe, or

[6]J. S. Bach, *The Well-Tempered Clavier*, vol. I, ed. Willard Palmer (Sherman Oaks, CA: Alfred Publishing, 1981).

completely dependable, or useful in every situation. The researcher arrives at the information needed by constantly interrogating the sources, asking of each source only the questions appropriate to it, finding other sources for the unanswered questions, collecting and collating information, and drawing interpretive conclusions based on the critical appraisal of all available information.

Recordings, too, offer less "proof" than they sometimes seem to. It is tempting, particularly for students, to feel that a particular point about a work is "proven"—how much ornamentation to use, what tempo is appropriate, or just "how it sounds"—by a persuasive recording, particularly if it is by a famous artist or ensemble. But an individual recording actually proves very little about a work. In one way, it is like a live performance: *x* amount of ornamentation may be appropriate, but the recording "proves" only that it worked *in this one performance*. Traditional, non-historically-informed readings of Baroque works may seem persuasive, and indeed the performers' artistry may make them so, but this does not "prove" anything about how the music was or is to be performed.

That music has been interpreted and recorded a certain way is no assurance that this is the way the music was conceived. For example, Jelly Roll Morton's recordings of Scott Joplin's *Maple Leaf Rag* are fascinating historical documents (and great pieces of playing to boot), but they tell us far more about the pianist and his background and taste than about Joplin and the classic piano rag. The same can be said of Vladimir Horowitz's recordings of Scarlatti, and of any number of other recorded performances. Recordings, even those *by* a composer or made under the composer's control, have few prescriptive applications. The critical acumen of the listener, and the ability to read a score and understand musical context, are of primary importance in using recordings.

There are, then, far more questions to be asked than there are answers to be depended upon. This is a good thing! Although it may initially make the research process seem intimidating, even impossible, what it really indicates is that research is a living, vibrant activity. Important materials are always being discovered, and important issues are always benefiting from reframed questions, more insightful consideration, and new perspectives. Not only do we learn more daily, we consider and reflect with more skill and wisdom daily. There are no questions that are so settled they do not need to be revisited, and no closed books in music research.

CITING YOUR SOURCES

Few research issues are as important as the proper use and citation of your sources. Citations enable you to tell the reader which of the ideas in your work originated with someone else, and where they might be found. (Citation forms are found in Chapter 9.) It is no crime to base your work on that of others; virtually every piece of research is founded, one way or another, on research that came before. But the failure to cite sources, which amounts to taking credit for another's thoughts—whether intentionally or inadvertently, whether the material is directly quoted or paraphrased—is *plagiarism*. Plagiarism is a crime in the publishing world and an actionable offense in colleges and universities, where standard penalties range from an automatic failing grade in the course to more lasting disciplinary action, including expulsion. Dishonesty is unforgivable; unfortunately, in matters of citation, carelessness is often indistinguishable from dishonesty. There is no margin for error in issues of academic integrity.

But does an author need to footnote every thought not explicitly his or her own? Of course not. All direct quotes require citation, as do specific facts that lie outside so-called common knowledge, such as: "In the Yardbirds 'Heart Full of Soul,' Jeff Beck based his guitar hook on the playing of a sitarist who was on an earlier take." Whether the writer has heard one of the outtakes from the recording session or read this fact somewhere, it needs to be cited. But matters of common knowledge should not be cited, even when they are new to novice researchers. This is a gray area, and not all authorities or writing instructors agree on what constitutes common knowledge, or on how rigorous student-authors need to be. (In academic circumstances, the instructor's preferences prevail in this matter.) Consider this sentence:

> George Gershwin was born in New York City in 1898 to immigrant parents, and began his musical career at a New York publishing house, playing through songs for prospective interpreters.

The information contained in such a sentence need not be cited, because it is available in countless biographical treatments of the composer and is neither new nor debatable. If you were to quote the sentence directly, you would certainly have to cite the source because the words would not be your own, but there is no reason that this sort of sentence should be quoted rather than paraphrased.

To Quote or to Paraphrase?

You will most often be quoting primary sources, such as historical documents or the comments or reminiscences of historical figures. Such direct quotations are splendid for making or supporting a point, but you should never assume that they need no explanation. What seems to you like an obvious connection may strike the reader as a non sequitur, so you must always provide commentary: before the quotation, some kind of lead-in that prepares the reader for what the quotation will explain or illustrate, and after it a transition to your next point. Paraphrasing is best for secondary sources (such as articles or books by scholars); such sources should only be quoted when you want to discuss or take specific issue with an author's formulation or view of the subject, such as when you need to address George Bernard Shaw's view of Brahms's *German Requiem* rather than the piece itself. Matters of fact, such as the sentence about Gershwin above, should be paraphrased, whether common knowledge or not. Finally, when another's words perfectly encapsulate the point you wish to make—be the original from the Bible, from Shakespeare, or from another writer about music—the passage can and should be quoted and cited. This kind of quotation often seems to culminate a discussion, and the change of authorial voice is an effective literary technique, when judiciously used.

TURNING RESEARCH INTO WRITING

The Foundations of Your Research

The research process is in one sense never-ending, but it does need to come to some kind of conclusion so that you can begin to write your paper. At the point you begin to write, you should feel ready to do so: both formative and specific research are completed, and you are prepared not only to view your subject in a proper context but also to arrive at some conclusions as a result of evaluating the evidence. Inevitably, minor issues will still crop up, and you will have to look things up throughout the writing process. But waiting until the research process is as complete as possible before you begin to write will help ensure that your overview of the subject will not undergo radical changes.

That confidently said, it is common for an important source or a major piece of information to pop up unexpectedly during the writing process—perhaps a late arrival from Interlibrary Loan, perhaps a professor's

offhand comment that points to a new direction, perhaps a realization of your own. Major revising and recasting, unforeseen and unscheduled, may well be necessary. There is no comfort in such cases other than remembering that this kind of semi-emergency is often a normal part of the process; all researchers, from students to professionals, know that research projects adapt themselves unwillingly to due dates and that inconveniences do occur.

From the point of completed research to writing, the process is much like that of essay writing (discussed in Chapter 5). You will need an outline, some kind of visual representation of the organization of your paper. The ordering and presentation of your premises, evidence, and conclusions, so that everything follows smoothly without causing doubt or giving pause, require time and reflection, and probably experimentation with more than one arrangement.

From here, it is a matter of *Sitzfleisch*, the padding on your coccyx bone. Good writing results not only from attention to the basics—preparation, outline, knowledge of readership, and the stylistic elements we discuss in Chapter 8—but also from *revising*, the process of repeatedly reading your own writing, learning to identify and improve wordy passages, unclear transitions, and other faults. The usual advice applies: write doggedly; if you get hung up, go on to something else; do not finish the opening and concluding paragraphs until the rest of the paper is done. Above all, *tell your story*. No amount of pseudo-academic writing will save a research paper in which the author has lost interest, or in which the research process was wrongly or incompletely carried out.

On Being Derivative

Many students and other fledgling authors fear being derivative, or basing their entire papers on others' research. But early in a research career (an undergraduate research paper is about as early as it is possible to be) one does not have much experience to draw on. The research process happens from the ground up: background and specifics have to be acquired as part of this process. (If you continue doing projects in a particular field, you will be building on previously acquired knowledge, and you will not have to keep starting anew.) Your first research papers must therefore be based largely on the work of others, primarily or exclusively on secondary sources. Nothing is wrong with this; solid experience using secondary sources is a prerequisite for being able to do primary research.

WHOSE IDEAS?

You may wonder how one can pass off research based on the work of others as one's own. Keep these points in mind:

- *You* chose which sources to use.
- *You* have thoroughly assimilated the material from these sources and paraphrased and reworded to the point that there is no possibility of plagiarism.
- The conclusions *you* drew from these sources are your own.

Choice of Sources

In choosing certain sources over others, trusting one perspective rather than another (sometimes called "privileging"), researchers make decisions for which they can and should be held responsible. That is, were someone to ask why the judgment found in one source was preferred to that found in another, the writer of the research paper should be able to provide an answer. What seems to be "merely" a presentation of information culled from other sources is therefore far more than that; the author, in choosing the sources and deciding what information to consider relevant from each, has shaped the study and made it something unique, not merely a rehash.

The Opening Paragraph

Writing the first paragraph of a research paper is the part of the process that almost always causes the most worry, rewriting, and frustration (not to mention rage). There is no way to avoid some share of this universal experience, so expect it and steel yourself to it. One idea that will always help is to *remember your subject and the points you want to make so you can begin by setting it all up*. Map out a strategy for getting from the general (say, rock music of the 1970s) to the specific (disco, or the punk band you want to talk about, or the emergence of country rock, or anything else). Regardless of what you were taught in high school, *do not* begin conversationally. Introductory passages such as "One of the main reasons I became a music major . . ." or "When I was given this assignment, I first thought I would . . ." tell the reader one thing: the author is having difficulties concentrating and the reader is paying the price—a bad message

to send. Rather, *get down to the subject at hand!* Keep creative writing in the background as much as possible.

Conclusions

The end of a research paper must not only follow logically from the coherent presentation of evidence and argument, but also demonstrate understanding and mastery of the subject of the paper. It is impossible to do this—to conclude, summarize, tie up in a neat package—without stating some kind of opinion.

Here is the concluding paragraph from a student research paper, "Folk Songs in the Music of Ralph Vaughan Williams," by Matthew Larson. The paper goes into some detail regarding Vaughan Williams's folk song collecting activities, his lifelong love of the folk idiom, and the ways in which he used both actual folk songs and more general elements from the English musical language—melodic modes, altered scale degrees, melodies that emphasize first and fifth scale degrees, and so on. In conclusion, Mr. Larson writes:

> Vaughan Williams once quoted Gilbert Murray as saying, "The original genius is at once the child of tradition and a rebel against it."[7] Williams himself was both a child of the cosmopolitan musical tradition he was born into and a rebel against it. His dedication to producing uniquely English music, his thorough knowledge of foreign music, and his loyalty to his own art made him the father of the twentieth-century school of composition in England. "He recreated an English musical vernacular, thereby enabling the next generation to take their nationality for granted . . ."[8] The next generation of English composers, even though they rebelled against it, could not help but be influenced and satisfied by the music Vaughan Williams revived. Without his work, English music

[7][Larson's note] Ralph Vaughan Williams, *The Making of Music* (New York: Cornell University Press, 1955), 52.
[8][Larson's note] Hugh Ottaway, "Vaughan Williams, Ralph," *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians* (London: Macmillan, 1980), vol. 19, 577.

would be nothing more than a hodgepodge of quotations from the music of other nations.

The wording here is rather strong; a couple of things are said that might better not have been. "Quotations" is the wrong word, and it is a bit insulting to suggest that the absence of any one individual would have resulted in a nation's music being a "hodgepodge." (The author might have done better without the last sentence entirely.) But for our purposes, this is beside the point. Mr. Larson has summarized what he wants the reader to take from his presentation of evidence—that Ralph Vaughan Williams's use of folk songs and of individual musical elements therefrom changed the character of English music for the entire century. He presents this not as fact but as his opinion, based on his evaluation of the music and sources he examined. His use of quoted material for context and to strengthen his point is effective and elegant. His conclusions are thus wholly appropriate for a research paper.

Concluding a paper properly is a real challenge, and it is too easy to fall back on certain clichés that are both meaningless and, in terms of the paper's overall effect, destructive. One often-used type of conclusion refuses to take a stand, instead calling for further research. The motivations for this sort of non-opinion are obvious, and they are not always wrong: caution in taking too risky a stand, or humility in not wanting to consider one's own research effort as the last word on a subject. Still, imagine reading, at the end of a substantial, data-driven study: "But it must be stressed that these results are only preliminary, and that they must be taken as such until further research replicates and corroborates these results." The researcher wants to communicate that he or she understands proper research method, that all the problems in the field will not be solved by this single paper, that certain kinds of results need to be reproducible. These cautions are responsible and laudable. However, the message communicated by such a statement drastically weakens the overall impression made by the research—it undermines the entire paper that led to it, and implies that the reader's time would have been better spent another way.

Another strategy consists of what I call "the-future-remains-to-be-seen" conclusions. A sentence such as "Only the future will tell if atonal music will gain ascendancy or if tonality will stage a comeback" is ultimately unhelpful in that it suggests nothing more than a shrug of the author's shoulders. Further, in the vague statement of an oppositional possibility, such conclusions mask deeper and more interesting possibilities

that might merit discussion—in this case, say, the yet unimagined musical possibilities that are neither tonal nor atonal, or the coexistence of tonal and atonal music (which is what we currently enjoy). The kind of conclusion parodied above provides one thing: an excuse for a not-too-graceful exit, which is always something to avoid.

Yet another ineffective idea is the quantum-leap summation, "in conclusion, this music was so influential that it led, ultimately, to the music of today" or "this music is so great it will survive eternally." Conclusions of this sort indicate two things: (1) the author has no idea what a conclusion ought to be, and (2) he or she at least wants to acknowledge that the music is important, somehow. These, too, are utterly insufficient conclusions.

The best way to approach conclusions, when one is having difficulty wrapping up, is to reread the paper several times (always a good idea in any case) in order to recapture a *global* sense of where it has been leading. Firm conclusions based on that, even if highly personal ("All this documentary material leads me to believe . . ."), are always more persuasive than an unwillingness to take any position at all, or a plaintive call for further research. Particularly on the undergraduate level, the paper may well be leading toward an assertion about which there is little disagreement—"It seems clear that Brahms's love of historical music was a strong influence on his choral compositions"—but such conclusions have presumably been prepared and backed up by the paper itself and are therefore sufficiently strong and appropriate.

Returning to Mr. Larson's conclusions, we note again how "authorial" they are, how they represent a personal position that results from the information presented. Larson's conclusion nicely illustrates a central point: no matter how extensively other sources have been used in a music research paper, it remains a very personal and subjective kind of project, and the author is not only present but responsible for the sources chosen and examined and the conclusions drawn. The responsibilities are great; because many skills are necessary in assembling a persuasive, informative presentation of research, research projects are among the most work-intensive writing projects in the musical field. When mastered, though, these skills prove useful in all areas of endeavor.